DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 552 EC 303 140

AUTHOR Wees, Janet
TITLE Successful Learning Strategies To Use with Gifted Learning Disabled Students.
PUB DATE Sep 92
NOTE 6p.; In: Images in Transition; see EC 303 125.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cognitive Style; *Enrichment Activities; *Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; *Gifted Disabled; Intermediate Grades; Kinesthetic Methods; Learning Activities; *Learning Disabilities; Learning Strategies; Remedial Instruction; *Simulation; Special Classes; Student Projects; Teaching Methods; Thematic Approach
IDENTIFIERS Calgary Board of Education AB

ABSTRACT

This paper describes a special class program for gifted students (aged 9 to 12) with learning disabilities in Calgary (Alberta). The program has evolved over its 4 years to stress kinesthetic, experiential learning. The issue of remediation versus enrichment was resolved when it was found that the students responded best to whole theme programming, with remedial instruction provided as problems arose. Most students preferred to learn kinesthetically, as well as orally-expressively, and showed great enthusiasm for drama, art, and science. Independent projects were set up using Benjamin Bloom's categories of thinking as well as timelines and outlines for structure. Much of the program focused on simulations which provided the students with a sense of experiential learning. Simulations included designing a dream home and a mock trial. Other strategies used included high interest, low vocabulary books; journal writing; experiential mathematics; and help in self-organization. Problems with the program involved consistency with home programs, limited classroom space, and lack of a computer. The paper concludes that these students prosper in such a program which cannot be provided in a regular classroom. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 371 552

Successful Learning Strategies to Use With Gifted Learning Disabled Students

Janet Wees
Calgary Board of Education

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Lupart

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

The classroom, in which these strategies were used, was housed in Huntington Hills Elementary in Calgary, for four years. The students consisted of students aged nine to twelve years, who had been placed from regular grades as well as learning disabled classes. For the first two years the population was all male, the last two years there were two girls. The teacher has an undergraduate degree in Special Education, a graduate diploma in Educational Psychology (with emphasis on Learning Disabilities) and a Masters in Gifted Education.

When the program began there were virtually no resources to serve as models. However, over the years, the program evolved through experimentation, student input and reading of articles and books. It became largely a kinesthetic, experiential program which showed very satisfactory progress, and helped improve self-esteem greatly. The definition of kinesthetic being total body involvement from the movement of the body to the mind and emotions. This involves not only using manipulatives in Math, but feelings of being in the situation which is being studied. When the children were immersed in what they were learning, the vocabulary, writing and spelling became more meaningful and was used in a natural way.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

The issue of remediation versus enrichment was quickly resolved, when it was found that the students responded much

EC 303140

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

better to whole theme programming with remediation put in incidentally as a problem arose. The program ran on a yearly theme, some of which were Empowerment, One World, Inter-relationships, and Explore and Discover. Learning styles inventories were given the students to discover how they preferred to learn. Most of the students preferred to learn kinesthetically, as well as orally-expressive. This was borne out in their extreme enthusiasm for drama, art and science.

Independent projects were set up using Bloom's categories of thinking and giving wide choices which reflected their preferences for learning. The topics chosen had timelines, and outlines to give structure. They were worked on exclusively until they were completed; then the next activity would begin. This was decided after the first year, when the students said they didn't like their day compartmentalized into sections.

The bulk of the program consisted of simulations which are interactive experiential learning activities. These put the students right into their learning so they actually felt they were living it. These activities ranged from a Design simulation where they designed their dream home according to their needs and budget, based on an imaginary family situation into which they were immersed to a mock trial held in an actual courtroom with an actual judge. The trial was a real case with witnesses (who dressed the part), lawyers,

clerks, security people and a jury. How better to learn about the justice system than to live it!

Other strategies used to motivate the students to learn were the use of high-interest, low-vocabulary books called "Classic Chillers"; blank books which were hard-cover books with blank pages which were filled by children's writing; novel studies which also followed Bloom's taxonomy; letter-writing and receiving answers (what a thrill that was!); making puppets and pop-up books; journal writing with drawings; Readers' Theatre; an at-home reading program; and the use of the Flaro method of learning spelling which involved extensive training in visualization beforehand.

Mathematics involved hands-on, experiential learning of major concepts, as well as daily computation practice. The procedure of pre-test, learn, post-test was used with math. The students thought it was pretty good that they didn't have to do "all the questions".

Some of the ways the students learned better organization was to use walkmans to block out auditory distractions, using carrels for desks (they had partitions on three sides), magazine file boxes for activity storage, daybooks, backpacks, and timetables glued at eye level. We are talking about random, spontaneous thinkers here, and they really need help in organizing themselves.

Socially there was partial integration into music/drama and gym. Some were integrated into science; however, large class sizes sometimes hindered this process. Peer editing,

reading buddies, lunches out with the teacher, circle time for discussing issues all contributed to the learning of social skills. An "egg project" held in conjunction with the Human Sexuality unit let them feel what it would be like to be responsible for something precious like a child.

Some of the problems encountered were consistency with at-home programs, the space in the classroom (it was 1/3 the size of a regular room), spelling skills didn't progress as quickly as reading and writing, there are not many kinesthetically-based programs at the Junior High level so there is not a carry-over of similar programs and the students have to conform to traditional methods, it is difficult to get many high-interest, low-vocabulary books because although there are some good ones, they are only going to whet their appetites for more, and there was no computer in the classroom.

Conclusions from these four years are that these students prosper from kinesthetic, experiential programs, need personal involvement with their learning and their teacher, are exceptional in drama and art, have wonderful senses of humor, benefit from simulated learning and are, on the average, random, spontaneous thinkers. They definitely need to be educated with peers, with integration in areas where social skills will be learned. They need enrichment and work on weaker areas. They cannot get that in regular classes as long as enrolments continue to be high, they don't respond well to sequential learning and emphasis on

remediation of Learning Disabled classes, and the gifted programs go too quickly. But as long as there is no money forthcoming, these students, and there are many more than you think, will be learning below their potential. They need a chance to bloom.